

## CONDITION OF THEATER

Experts Pass Opinion on the Iroquois.

### PRECAUTIONS WERE LACKING

Alleged That Asbestos Curtain Was Cheap Affair.

Appears to Have Been Criminal Lack of Fire Apparatus and Emergency Equipments.

Chicago, Dec. 31.—The best evidence which is at present obtainable is that the fire was started by sparks from an arc light striking the edge of the drop curtain, but this has not been proved. There are so many statements as to the cause at present and they differ so widely that it is impossible to ascertain the exact truth of the matter.

Although the Iroquois theater was as safe as any theater in Chicago, it became evident today that the city building department had not strictly enforced one or two sections of the building ordinances.

#### WITHIN THE LAW.

William Curran, a building inspector, was in the theater only a few moments before the catastrophe, and went away saying that everything was in good condition. He reported this fact this morning to Deputy Building Commissioner Stanhope. The deputy commissioner this morning, in company with Inspectors Laughlin, Lense and Dalton, went to the theater to make an inspection. On his return to the city hall he said:

"The theater and its management were strictly within the law. I shall not go into details until I have completed my report."

#### HAD NO SPRINKLERS.

Section 185 of the local building ordinance provides that in buildings of the class to which the Iroquois belongs there shall be a system of automatic sprinklers. There were no sprinklers in the Iroquois theater, and when this was called to his attention, Mr. Stanhope said: "There was no sprinkler system in the theater, but the provision about the iron doors made it unnecessary for the theater to have them."

Section 186 of the ordinance provides that theaters be equipped with fire alarms connected with the city fire alarm system. Mr. Stanhope said:

#### NO FIRE ALARM.

"The Iroquois had fire alarm connections. I did not see the box, but that is my information." City Electrician Hyland said:

"The Iroquois had no fire alarm connection with the city alarm system. No application is on file for any such connection." The alarm of fire was turned in from a box more than half a block from the theater.

#### NO VENTILATOR SHAFT.

The law provides that there shall be a ventilating shaft at the rear end of the stage to conduct flames and smoke away from the auditorium in just such emergencies as occurred yesterday. The Iroquois possessed no such ventilating shaft.

Twelve Aldermen today inspected the theater and returned to the city hall, and called on the building department. They asked to be shown the plans of the theater, and Mr. Stanhope produced them.

"How about sprinklers?" demanded Alderman Jones. "The way the theater is built they can be left out," Mr. Stanhope replied. "And, anyhow, the flames spread so rapidly that no sprinkler system would have saved anything." Alderman Jones then remarked that the ordinance requires all exits to be marked.

#### CONFUSION OF EXITS.

"That will be looked into," Mr. Stanhope said. "Remember, however, that the lights were out and that many people were killed in their seats."

Pointing to the diagram of the theater, Alderman Herman said: "Here is a passageway on the south side of the first balcony, which looks as though it led to a stairway. But in the darkness people scrambling through it were caught like rats in a trap. The exits were not marked. The confusion of exits was such that no one could find his way in the dark. If those things are regarded as exits, I do not know what constitutes an exit that would be of any use."

#### COULD NOT GET OUT.

Mr. Stanhope told the Aldermen that he had made an inspection of the building, and that structurally it was good.

"You cannot convince me," declared Alderman Herman. "If you talk for 100 years, that people could get out of that place. I do not care what they called the exits they did not work; there was not enough of them open, and the people could not get out. These plans show aisles at the end of the first floor, but we were over there and saw the seats run bang up against the railing, leaving no aisle at all. Now, what I building to know is, did these people in this building this theater live up to the plans they submitted to the city building department? Here there seemed to be ample exits on paper, but a number of friends of mine got badly scorched just the same."

#### LOW-GRADE ASBESTOS.

"On the first floor they got out," said Mr. Stanhope. "My friends were on the first floor, but they received burns on their backs, just the same." Alderman Herman rejoined: "Alderman Priestly declared that in the second balcony there was not sufficient room when the seats were down to allow any one to walk between them. Alderman Scully and Alderman Conery took from the floor of the stage, bits of curtain, none of which was larger than the palm of a hand, to the store of an asbestos company. The bits were shown to be of asbestos, although the examiner pronounced it of a low grade."

#### WANT THEATERS CLOSED.

"They wanted a cheap curtain and they got it," an incautious clerk remarked. He was instantly hushed up

by one of the members of the company, who added that they did not wish to discuss the matter inasmuch as they had bid on supplying the curtain of the theater and their bid had been rejected for a lower one.

From the action of a committee of prominent architects of Chicago today may result a recommendation to Mayor Harrison to close every theater in Chicago until the exits and the construction have been examined. This idea was suggested to President Beaumont of the Chicago Architects' association today by W. A. Pridmore, an architect who lost some relatives in the fire. President Beaumont refused personally to make the recommendation to Mayor Harrison, but called an informal meeting of the association, at which it was decided that a larger gathering of the members would be held tomorrow to take action. Mayor Harrison said tonight:

#### NO REASON FOR CLOSING.

"I see no more reason for closing all the theaters than for stopping all railway trains after a disastrous wreck. There is no necessity of becoming hysterical about this matter, although this horrible disaster has taken place in probably the safest theater in Chicago. The Mayor tonight sent the following letter to all theatrical proprietors in Chicago:

"November 2nd, this year, I transmitted to the City Council a report on the theaters of Chicago, calling the attention of the Council to the failure of the theaters to comply fully with the terms of the building ordinance relative to places of amusement. The Council sent the communication to the committee on judiciary for consideration, and pending a report from that committee, directed the City Engineer to Buildings to suspend enforcement of the ordinance."

#### HAD NO FIREMEN.

"The city ordinance, among other things, requires each theater to employ a fireman, to be approved by the chief of the fire department, to look after the fire protection of the house. I am advised by the chief that several theaters have refused to comply with its provisions. In view of the terrible disaster at the Iroquois theater, and pending action of the City Council, I have directed the chief of the fire department to assign one regular member of the department to each theater not complying with the ordinance relating to the employment of a fireman."

#### MAYOR HARRISON'S ORDER.

"The firemen now employed by the theaters should be assigned to the front of the house, while the fireman assigned by the chief should be assigned to the stage. I have further directed the chief in cases where the ordinance has not been obeyed to assign two regular firemen to the duty of protecting the public against fire. The wages of these firemen will be billed direct to the theaters to which they are assigned, and the service will be continued until the Council has finally acted on the ordinance. After dispatching this letter the Mayor said:

#### NO AID NEEDED.

"If any one of the theatrical managers refuses to pay the wages of these men, as several of them have refused in the past, I will close the doors of the theaters, and keep them closed until they agree to act as they should."

All during the day telegrams of sympathy to the people of Chicago and offers of aid poured in by telegraph on the Mayor. He announced tonight: "I have received many offers of aid. It may be that before we get through this trouble a few persons will be found to be in need, but Chicago will be able to give that aid herself. Most of those killed and injured, now identified, can be abundantly cared for."

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## CHICAGO FIRE VICTIMS

(Continued from Page 1.)

Houseman, having escorted his party out, took a position at his door and kept it from choking up by assisting people through.

**CAUGHT WOMEN WHO JUMPED.**  
Finally, forced away by the flames, Houseman got into the alley just in time to hear the agonized voice of a woman from the window in an upper gallery shriek "Catch me." As the woman screamed she jumped and Houseman, catching her to the best of his ability, broke her fall to the ground and she walked away uninjured.

Clinton C. Meeker, a clerk in the registry division of the postoffice, living in the suburb of Irving park, has probably lost in the fire his entire family, consisting of his wife, two daughters and two sons.

#### SHOCKING DISCOVERY.

A friend called Mr. Meeker on the phone at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and asked him if any of his family had gone to the theater. He answered that so far as he knew none of them had left home. When he reached the house, however, he found only his mother-in-law there.

"Where are Mabel and the children?" he asked. "They have gone to the Iroquois theater," was the reply. "I dropped right down on my knees," said Mr. Meeker, "and prayed that God might spare them."

Today Mr. Meeker had partially identified the bodies of his wife and two daughters. He failed to find any trace of his two sons.

#### PHYSICIANS ON GROUND.

**Prompt Action by the City Authorities to Aid Wounded.**

Chicago, Dec. 31.—It was a cause of wonder to many people around the Iroquois theater building how so many physicians and so many trained nurses could arrive on the spot within so short a time. Dr. Herman Spalding, senior official in the city Health department at the time the fire broke out, made all the arrangements for medical attendance.

"I telephoned to all the physicians in the downtown districts," he said, "and then to hospitals, nurse associations and schools for persons to assist in the care of the injured. Employees telephoned to all the principal office buildings and told the operators at the switchboards to notify every physician in the building, while others telephoned to the nurses. There were over 100 physicians whom I personally knew at the fire and probably 150 nurses."

**MAYOR HARRISON ABSENT.**  
Mayor Harrison was on his way to the South for a hunting trip, and Comptroller McGinn was acting Mayor. The Finance committee of the City Council was in session when the extent of the disaster became known at the city hall. Mr. McGinn was authorized by Chair-

man Mayor of the committee to direct the fire marshal, the Chief of Police and the Commissioner of Public Works to proceed in the emergency without any restriction of any kind as to expenses.

#### ABSOLUTION TO CATHOLICS.

When the Rev. P. O'Brien of the Holy Name cathedral learned of the fire he hurried to the old Tremont house, now converted into the Northwestern university hall, to administer the last sacrament to members of the Catholic church. He was followed by Bishop Muldoon, the highest Catholic prelate, next to Archbishop Quigley, in the diocese of Chicago.

Finding that they were unable to attend the great number being brought in, Bishop Muldoon announced that he would give a general absolution to all the Catholics among the victims.

#### APPEALS FROM THE DYING.

During the brief moment that the two priests, with uplifted hands besought God to pardon all the frailties of his dying servants, the poor mangled men and women lay in dozens on the floor seemed to realize that their last hour had come. Many, though crazed with pain, ceased to moan, and fastened their fast-dimmed eyes on the two priests. After the absolution was given, some of them barely able to move, feebly stretched out their hands imploringly to the priests for one hand clasp and one word of sympathy before they passed away. Both the clergy administered absolution, remaining until the dead were removed to the morgue and the injured to various hospitals.

#### WORKED TO SAVE GIRL.

Over one girl in Thompson's restaurant, the doctors labored for one hour. They loosened her dress and one of them waved her arms over her head and slowly down again, in an attempt to induce artificial respiration. Every moment or two one of them listened with his stethoscope for her heart beats. There was not a sign of a burn on her. She could not have been more than 16 years old, and when they forced her eyelids apart her brown eyes were yet bright.

"She is too perfect a creature to give up," said one doctor. Stimulant after stimulant was tried, and last of all nitroglycerin, but proved useless, and in the end the doctor gave up.

#### CHILD'S MARVELOUS ESCAPE.

"I'm the most grateful man in all Chicago," said John A. Thompson, who owns the restaurant. "My sister was in the theater with her daughter, aged 7. She almost got to the door with both of them when Ruth, one of them, disappeared. My sister told me she knew that the child must be safe, but I can't prove it. She was like a cat, and before I found her. How it happened I do not know, but she ran back into the theater and out under the stage through the stage entrance."

#### IGNORANT OF DISASTER.

One of the largest audiences ever seen in the Garrick theater, which is on the same block as the Iroquois, less than a block distant, sat in complete ignorance of the awful tragedy being enacted 200 feet away. When the intermission between acts came Manager Schubert ordered the doors closed, and refused to allow any one to go in or out, as he was determined that no knowledge of the fire should reach the audience. Wilton Lackey, the star of the play now being presented at the Garrick, stepped before the curtain and entertained the audience for over five minutes with a witty speech, which kept his hearers in continual laughter. The curtain rose for the next act without any delay, and the theater employees knowing that hundreds of lives were being sacrificed almost next door.

#### LOOKING FOR LOVED FACES.

When the people filed out of the Garrick they were greeted at the door by hundreds of frantic men and women who anxiously scanned their faces, looking for members of their families and acquaintances who had gone down simply to attend a matinee, without stating to what theater they had intended to go. There were many scenes of joyful recognition, and astonished members of the thrick audience were hugged and kissed in frantic delight by relatives.

#### PROMPT WITH RELIEF.

**New York Theatrical People Will Give Benefit for Sufferers.**

New York, Dec. 31.—The news of the Chicago disaster was followed in New York by the announcement of several benefits for the fire sufferers. S. S. Schubert immediately telegraphed his manager in Chicago to devote the receipts of next Wednesday's matinee of "The Pic" to the sufferers, and announced that the proceeds of Wednesday's matinee of "Winsome Winnie," which would be devoted to the same cause. The "Red Feather" company will also give a benefit. A number of other managers are considering similar liberal acts.

Carl Hayman, Marcus Klaw and Abram Erlanger, the leading members of the theatrical syndicate who own large interests in the Iroquois theater, sat in their offices in the New Amsterdam hotel, until, after midnight, eagerly awaiting the telegrams from the Chicago representatives. They were horrified and bewildered by the numerous reports, and had little to say as to the cause of the fire.

Klaw and Erlanger own "Mr. Bluebeard." Their representative said it cost \$65,000 to produce it there. About 240 people were with the production on the road. At every other theater on Broadway the Chicago disaster was the one subject of conversation among managers, employees and audience. Actors crowded the wings behind the acts, listening to news of the disaster.

#### CAUSE OF FIRE.

**Various Theories Advanced, but No Positive Explanation.**

Chicago, Dec. 31.—Among many of the theatrical men employed in the other Chicago theaters, the responsibility for the Iroquois theater fire was ascribed today to the careless placing of electric arc light apparatus too close to one of the hanging borders of the scenery. The electrician of a leading Chicago theater expressed great surprise on hearing that this was considered a possible cause of the fire.

"There never would have been any fire," he said, "if proper care had been exercised in handling the lights. The electric plant of the theater was installed, as I happen to know from personal observation, in accordance with every modern requirement for safety. The plant was not to blame. If the facts I have given are correct, the whole blame rests on the person who

placed, or who was operating, a light so close to the curtain."

The failure of the expected fire protection afforded by insurance men to trouble with the asbestos curtain. The stage is always recognized as the danger point in the theater and the desire is to have it cut off from the auditorium as thoroughly as possible. The insurance men declare that the curtain at the Iroquois never had worked perfectly and that the mechanism had not been repaired.

E. R. Winters of the insurance firm which placed the Iroquois theater, declared today that the loss would not exceed \$20,000. He also asserted that if spread of the flames to the auditorium was due to the carelessness of the asbestos curtain to work properly.

Early last summer a prominent trade journal of Chicago criticized the construction of the Iroquois theater because it lacked a shaft or flue at the back of the stage for carrying the flames and smoke upward and away from the auditorium in the event of fire. Such shafts were built in Madison Square Garden and the Metropolitan opera-house in New York and a similar provision is made at the Chicago Auditorium.

The method of fire-proofing the balcony and gallery was also declared by this magazine to be defective because metal lath was used in what is known as exposed construction where heat would easily affect it. In modern fire-proof buildings this lath is buried in concrete. It was the buckling out of this metal lath and iron rods giving the impression that the galleries themselves were falling that is believed by some contractors to have been partly responsible for the disaster. There is no criticism of the strength of the gallery and balcony arches, which were built in the usual manner.

#### CITY IS STUNNED.

**Iroquois Theater Was Turned Into Real Chamber of Horrors.**

Chicago, Dec. 31.—It is no exaggeration of language to say that the city is stunned by the overwhelming tragedy which was enacted when the Iroquois theater, which housed "Mr. Bluebeard," became a chamber of horrors indeed. There is the deepest woe in hundreds of homes today, deep sorrow in a thousand others, and a pity beyond the potency of words to convey in all.

#### SEARCH FOR DEAD.

The first streak of daylight found the morgues still the sorrow-haunted center of many a searcher. There were husbands hunting for their wives, wives searching for husbands, frenzied parents seeking their children, so many of whom lost their lives, and in some instances wide-eyed children, still dazed from the horror of their experience, groped dispiritedly about in search of father or mother.

#### TRUCE CALLED IN STRIKE.

Possibly nothing could better typify the depth of the sympathy which is felt for those who suffered directly by the calamity than the action of the striking livery drivers. By a vote which was without a dissenting voice, it was decided to call a truce to the strike. President Albert Young of the union after the meeting issued the following decree, which was distributed broadcast:

"Coming to the great disaster to the public caused by the fire at the Iroquois theater, I do hereby declare a truce in the present strike of undertakers and livery drivers. Every man now on strike report at once to their respective places of employment, and do everything in their power to assist their employer in caring for the wants of the public. Wages are to have no consideration."

In return the employers issued a call to their striking employees to return to work "irrespective of any previous affiliations with any and all organizations," and promising to protect them in all contingencies which may arise in the future.

#### NO NOISE IN CHICAGO.

**Mayor Harrison Requests Usual Demonstrations Be Abandoned.**

Chicago, Dec. 31.—Following is the text of a proclamation issued by Mayor Harrison today:

"On each recurring New Year's eve annoyance has been caused to the sick and infirm by the indulgence of thoughtless persons in noisy celebrations of the passing of the old year. The city authorities have at all times discouraged this practice, and now, when Chicago lies in the shadow of the greatest disaster in her history for a generation, noise-making, whether by bells, whistles, cannon, horns or any other means, is particularly objectionable."

"As Mayor of Chicago I would therefore request all persons to refrain from this indulgence, and I would particularly ask all railway officials and all persons in control of factories, boats and cars to direct their employees not to blow whistles between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock tonight."

"CARTER H. HARRISON."

#### SAVED JUST IN TIME.

**Actors Wedged About Little Trap Door, Which Would Not Open.**

Flags were placed at half-mast all over the city today, Mayor Harrison setting the example at the city hall.

One of the heroes of the fire was Peter Quinn, chief special agent of the Santa Fe railway system, who assisted in saving the lives of one hundred or more of the victims of the theater proper. Wedged so tightly in a crowd at the door of the stage entrance that they could not move, the women, men and children coming the company of performers were standing helplessly and with agonizing looks on their faces. The stage door was closed.

#### THEATER DEATH TRAP.

"The massive stage door of the Iroquois," said Mr. Quinn today, "is like

#### REAL WISDOM.

**The Method Adopted by the Monks of Olden Time.**

The wise old monks, when any house was suffering from the pest of vermin, used to go and say four "Paters" and "Aves" and charge accordingly—but they were extremely careful to spread a little rat poison around as the six just to keep up their reputation.

You may use any quantity of so-called "hair tonics" but if you want to be rid of Dandruff and falling hair, a little Newbro's Herpicide will be advisable. It goes to the seat of the trouble and kills the innumerable germs which are eating up the life of the hair and causing it to fall out.

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many others of its kind. "The two main swinging doors are used when scenery is taken on or from the theater and built in the swinging structure itself is a small trap door used by the players in leaving the stage. This trap door, which I have opened inwardly. As I passed it I heard a commotion and saw the door was slightly open and peering into the opening I curiously asked what was the trouble."

**SOLID MASS OF HUMANITY.**  
"Then for the first time I and others who had arrived outside about the same time, learned that the theater was on fire. The players who had rushed for the trap door got caught in a solid mass and were so firmly wedged together that they could not move. They were banded solidly against the little door and it could not be opened. Nearly all the players were in their stage costumes and the women had not even time to wash the paint from their faces. We tried to force the door open, but the crowd was banded up too tightly against it."

**RELEASED AGONIZED ACTORS.**  
"Then came of volume of smoke and far in the rear of the crowd we could see the illumination from the flames. I had a number of small tools in my pocket and immediately proceeded to remove the metal attachment which held the door in place. This was accomplished with some difficulty and then we managed to force the crowd back, probably an inch, and then they dropped from its place and one by one the imprisoned players were assisted into the stage costumes and the women had time to wash the paint from their faces. We found it a seething furnace. The players had been rescued just in time."

**CURTAIN WAS JAMMED.**  
Employees of the theater place the terrible loss of life to the "jamming" of the asbestos curtain. At every performance of the show the asbestos curtain has been raised and lowered. It has always run smoothly, according to the employees, and it was so arranged that should one of the cables holding it break the curtain would descend by its own weight. The asbestos curtain was held by four steel cables. It slid up and down on a guide by two others, one on each side. These four cables extended above the gridiron, the framework which supports the tackle by which the scenery is raised and lowered to the side walls. There they were attached to a large steel plate. To the steel plate was attached a Manila rope.

**WORKED BY CABLES.**  
This rope led down to the stage around a block. It then led aloft and ran through other blocks and pulleys. On the going up the counter-weights were attached, on which there were enough to make less than an absolute balance for the curtain. The asbestos curtain was so heavy that it released it would come down of its own weight.

All of the employees deny there has been any previous fire in the house. The employees also deny that any of the doors to exits were locked.

#### WEEPING AT THE MORGUE.

**Horried and Grief-Crazed Relatives Search for Missing.**

The greatest center of excitement today was not at the theater but Rolston's morgue, to which the dead were taken. All the morgues were surrounded, but at Rolston's, where more bodies were taken than to any other, the scenes of anguish were worst. About the doors of the place were massed hundreds of men, and surrounding them, like a huge fan, spread the hundreds of weeping women and children. The numerous police stationed there could not begin to handle the crowds and extra details were hurried to the place. On a lesser scale the same fearful scene was in progress at the various other morgues.

#### THEATER PARTY DEAD.

E. C. Frady, president of the Strohber Piano company, today, after unceasing search, found five dead of a theater party of six, headed by his wife. Each one was found at a different morgue. One is still missing. Those identified were Mrs. William M. Frady, Mrs. J. H. Spindler, 10 years old, Leon Frady, 10 years old, Frady's mother-in-law died at St. Luke's an hour after reaching the hospital. Mrs. William Frady, a sister of Frady, is still missing.

**HEADLESS BOY IDENTIFIED.**  
One of the most peculiar of the identifications today was that of the headless body of Boyer Alexander, 8 years old. The lad's father, Dr. W. D. Alexander, 65 Washington boulevard, had anxiously sought his son all night long, and today, in examining the headless corpse of a

(Continued on Page 2.)

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